



## Thurston County ORV Sports Park

Fact Sheet

September 2004

### Background

Thurston County operates one of three publicly owned ORV sports parks in the state. The other two are in Spokane County and Richland. In 2002, Thurston County closed the park, citing a need to maintain and improve parks that benefited local residents and because of concerns about the liability following the deaths of two people. The Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation (IAC), which has funded the park's development and maintenance, believes the county has violated its contracts with IAC by closing the park. The IAC has been working with the county on possible solutions for reopening the park but to date, the county and IAC have been unable to reach agreement.

### Park location and amenities

The 150-acre park is along State Highway 8, west of Olympia. About 75 acres are in Thurston County and 75 acres are in Grays Harbor County. The park offers structured tracks for off-road vehicles and in 2002 had 33,000 user visits.

The park offers a 4x4 track, flat track, Motocross track, sand drag strip, campground, concession stand, grandstand, meeting hall, playground, restrooms, maintenance buildings and caretaker's residence, parking, fencing, and storm water facilities.

In 2002, Thurston County reported 26 events and raised \$187,000 in revenue. Typical events include All Terrain Vehicle safety classes, Motocross races, 4x4 play days, go-kart races, equipment demos, and trail events.

### Funding

In 1977-78, Thurston County had received \$450,937 and Grays Harbor County had received \$350,678 for purchasing a private ORV park, developing it, and maintaining the facility. The funding was from a grant program administered by the IAC.

Since 1978, Thurston County has received 32 grants from the IAC

Project	Number of Grants	Amount
Planning	1	\$50,000
Development	14	\$1,675,229
Maintenance & Operation	17	\$2,707,886
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Total Projects	32	\$4,433,115

### Timeline

Late 1970s – Thurston and Grays Harbor counties purchase the ORV Sports Park.

July 2002 – Thurston County sends inquiry to IAC about the consequences of closing the ORV park. IAC staff informs Thurston County of the conversion requirements found in the contracts, including notifying them that they must seek approval from the IAC.



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November 2002 – Thurston County Commissioners vote to close the ORV park.

January-April 2003 – IAC staff meet with Thurston County park staff to discuss options for reopening the park. Staff briefs the IAC board about the park's closure.

May 2003 – Thurston County sends a letter to IAC affirming that the county has no intention of re-opening the park.

Summer 2003 – IAC hires a facilitator to work with Thurston County staff and user groups to develop a proposal for re-opening the park.

February 2004 – Thurston County sends IAC a proposal requesting:

- Ongoing guarantee of funds to cover operating expenses, facilities repair and replacements, and capital improvements.
- Non-competitive funds for capital improvements as outlined in the park's master plan.
- Payment of a noise mitigation study and improvements made to lessen the noise.
- Depreciation of the value of capital improvements used in calculating the amount the county would owe IAC if the county closed the park or converted it to another use.
- Reimbursement of the cost of storm water improvements.
- Reimbursement of \$5,000 for the county's work to write a master plan.

April 2004 – The IAC directs staff to enter into mediation with Thurston County to see if short- and long-term solutions can be developed. Thurston County informs IAC that they are not interested in mediation.

May 2004 – Staff prepares a memo outlining three options for the IAC to consider at its May 21 meeting. One option would have provided funding to the county for up to three years so the park could reopen and the issues could be worked through.

Thurston County Commissioners tell IAC in a letter that unless the conditions of their February 2004 proposal are met in full, they would request that both parties proceed with judicial action. The IAC, at its May 21 meeting, approved a motion directing its attorneys to pursue all legal options to resolve the ORV park issue and requested a briefing at the July 2004 meeting.

July 2004 – IAC receives a briefing.

September 2004 – IAC reaffirms its decision to pursue litigation to resolve the closure of the ORV park.